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14 May 1980

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Comments on "Oil Field Invasion" of Hatfield
Backgrounder, April 1980

1. At this point, it is not possible to assay the precise mixture of motives that led the Soviets to invade Afghanistan. Preservation of a Soviet-dominated, Marxist regime in Kabul probably was the dominant one, however. It is less clear that Soviet fear of encirclement, or of the spread of the Moslem revolt to Soviet Central Asia were major considerations, although they may have been factored in by the Soviet leadership. Also, as the Hatfield Backgrounder suggests, chaotic conditions in Iran--exacerbated by the hostage crisis--may have made the Afghanistan invasion look more attractive to the Soviets.

25X1

2. We agree with the Hatfield Backgrounder that the most direct strategic route to the Iranian oil fields leads from the Soviet Transcaucasus Military District down through northwestern Iran. The route through Afghanistan is far longer, presents greater logistical difficulties, and would require much more regrouping of forces than would the attack through northwestern Iran.

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3. We estimate that, if the Soviets decided on an invasion of Iran to capture the oilfields, Tehran, and key terrain on the Persian Gulf, they probably would assemble a force of at least 20 divisions. A force this size could be drawn from the central and southern regions of the USSR without seriously affecting Soviet forces presently assumed to be designated for use against NATO or the PRC.

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4. The Soviets' lodgment in Afghanistan may not lead directly to Iranian oil but it does bring them a strategic gain of great importance. From Afghanistan, they are in a position to threaten the flanks of both Iran and Pakistan--and India, through Pakistan. In this sense, and in the sense that from bases in Afghanistan Soviet airpower can more easily reach the Persian Gulf, the Soviets have come closer to realizing their ancient goal of dominating the region.

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief, OPA/USSR-EE

Please provide comments on the attached
typescript memo by COB, 15 May.

[Redacted Signature]

25X1

Chief
Theater Forces Division, OSR


Attachment

Date 13 May 1980

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief, RAD

Please provide comments on the attached
typescript memo by COB, 15 May.


Chief
Theater Forces Division, OSR

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Attachment

Date 13 May 1980

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TO:

OSR

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ROOM NO.

BUILDING

3G00

REMARKS:

Sen. Nunn would like our assessment of the "Oil Field Invasion" section of this article from the Hatfield Newsletter. Nothing lengthy; a few sentences on its plausibility would be fine. You probably will want to coordinate with OPA.

Thanks,

CSS

*Could you make some comment
on this and coordinate with RA.
J. Duke*

FROM:

clear that the Soviets were willing to take full advantage of this singular concentration of global interest in events in Tehran.

Oil Field Invasion

The most serious explanation of Soviet motives rests in the belief that the invasion was merely the first step in an effort to secure the oil fields of the Middle East, a warm water port in the Persian Gulf, or both. It is this danger that largely promoted the military commitment made under the Carter Doctrine. But this view of Soviet intentions ignores some important factors. The contention that Afghanistan was a stepping stone to the oil fields of Iran, for example, ignores fundamental facts.

The most direct method of securing Persian Gulf oil would be a Soviet assault down from its present southern border with Iran. By the route, Soviet troops and tanks would not have to traverse the high mountain ranges standing between Iran and Afghanistan. In addition, if the Soviets were to take over certain oil fields in the Middle East to "strangle" the West and help supply their own allies, they would have to secure and defend indefinitely 1/4 million square miles of sea lanes, desert, and air space, as well as thousands of miles of pipelines from internal and external attack. The military demands for an operation of this size would be far beyond the capabilities of any country - or group of countries - on earth. Any constant military operation of this stature would also drain resources from other military theaters around the world, thus increasing instability in other vital regions of the globe, such as Europe or Korea.

Soviet Losses

It now seems clear that the Soviets have made a profound mistake in invading Afghanistan. Consider the Soviet losses:

- Major Soviet military forces are

- The Soviets suffered one of its history in an overwhelming vote in the United Nations to condemn the Soviets' action in Afghanistan.

This is only a limited list. Afghanistan is not the Soviet Union's "Vietnam" in a military sense. The U.S. lost over 55,000 lives, 303,000 casualties and \$150-200 billion in a decade-long effort to win a war that was 10,000 miles from its shores. Afghanistan, by contrast, is a Soviet border state in which the serious problems of supply and a well-equipped indigenous army do not exist. The Soviets have suffered - and are likely to continue to suffer - serious military setbacks in Afghanistan. However, these failures cannot hope to match the conflagration that was Vietnam.

Afghanistan may well be however, the political "Vietnam" of the Soviet Union. Following the invasion, the loss of Soviet prestige throughout the world, even among nations which have traditionally defended their actions, was dramatic and indisputable.

Nuclear Weapons: The Threshold of World War

The greatest danger of the Carter Doctrine lies in its dependency on nuclear weapons.

There are no major indigenous armies in the Persian Gulf-Southwest Asia region. This is an historically unique circumstance in areas of the world where substantial U.S.-Soviet competition has occurred. During the past 30 years of the Cold War, U.S. and Soviet interests have been largely fought with the aid of proxy armies with major conventional strength.

When conflict arose between Israel and Arab nations in the Middle East, the war was waged with Soviet vs. U.S. weapons. The Israeli victories were seen by many defense specialists as not just a victory for that nation, but also a triumph of U.S. military technology over that of the Soviets. In Europe and Southeast Asia and elsewhere throughout the Cold

War, the Carter Doctrine has indicated that any first nuclear war would result in an escalation into a nuclear war. Such a war would leave a wasteland of industrial civilization.

Nor is this lack of conventional forces, and the attendant danger of nuclear war in the region, likely to be significantly altered even after deployment of the Rapid Deployment Force (RDF) by 1985. The conventional manpower needed for a sustained defense of Persian Gulf oil could easily require many times the troop strength available in the RDF.

Any promise to defend the Persian Gulf region from attack is a military illusion. In order to defend this illusion, the first-use of tactical nuclear weapons, and the uncertainty that brings for civilized life, will almost certainly be required. The 31% of our oil imports that come through the Persian Gulf represents some 8% of our total energy consumption. There is no natural resource precious enough to this country, particularly a resource that can be placed with alternatives and conservation, to justify the cataclysmic price that will ultimately be paid for any attempted nuclear "defense" of the Persian Gulf under the Carter Doctrine.

Options: The Roads Not Taken

The projected five-year, \$1 trillion in military spending sanctified by the Carter Doctrine will most probably aggravate, not solve, the problems that confront us. It is an exercise in self-delusion to believe that increases in U.S. weaponry - no matter how large - or crescendos of talk - no matter how tough - could have prevented the Soviets from their actions in Afghanistan. The U.S. enjoyed a virtual nuclear monopoly in 1956 and unquestioned strategic superiority in 1968. Yet this clear advantage did not have a noticeable effect on the Soviet military action against Hungary and Czechoslovakia in those years. The forces likely to drive the Soviets out of Afghanistan are across-the-board economic sanctions and a growing